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Appeal to the People
of the
Christian Church

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An Appeal to the People of the Christian Church

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C. J. CADOUX, M.A., D.D.

Mansfield College, Oxford, England



THE FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

108 Lexington Avenue, New York City

AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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I.—INTRODUCTION.

1. Of the many Christian people who felt quite convinced as to their personal duty in supporting the side of this country and the Allies in the recent war, there were probably few who did not take that position with great reluctance and without knowing exactly how it was to be harmonised with the religion they professed. In the agony of the crisis, many must have felt that to answer the call to arms was a more immediate duty than to seek for a thoroughly satisfactory solution to an intricate theoretical problem. The sacrifice of purely individual and personal scruples and of complete intellectual consistency seemed to present itself as part of the great sacrifice for which the hour called. Now that the pressure of those four dreadful years has been relaxed, it is inevitable that the problem of the relation of Christianity to war should re-assert itself in our midst and clamour aloud for solution. The new vision that the war has given us of the unspeakable abominations inevitable on a modern battlefield, of the awful drop that war occasions in the moral and spiritual standing of individuals and communities, and of the universal ruin that is sure to follow if another general conflict breaks out, only makes the quest of a solution the more urgent.

2. The members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation therefore ask their fellow-Christians to consider with them afresh, and with open minds, the problem of the relation of Christianity to war. The fact of having committed one's self to a certain position at a time of crisis ought not to deter any of us on either side from such a reexamination of the question. We may have been right in doing yesterday with the light we had then what we should be wrong in doing to-morrow if new light should dawn on us in the interval. It must surely be for all serious-minded Christians a question of the first importance what their attitude would be if another war were to break out.

II.—THE FUNDAMENTALS.

1. Beginning, therefore, with the most central and essential things in our common faith, we could probably all agree—whatever our particular theological views—in committing ourselves at least to this: that the core of the truth as it is in Jesus is the reconciliation of man to God, the conquest of sin in the life of the individual man (and, through him, of society) by the revelation to him—in the life and death of Jesus—of God as a holy and loving Father who is suffering for His child's wrongdoing and is waiting and longing and working for His child's repentance and obedience.

2. That being so, we are bound to go further and ask what this fact means when brought to bear on our own attitude to the wrongdoing of our fellow-men. To put the cross of Christ in one department and Christian ethics in another is surely to disconnect—and that dangerously—two aspects of our faith that together ought to form a living unity. For Jesus Himself is a unity; and Christian discipleship means, not only the glad acceptance of His message about God's love, but also the personal adoption of His principles of human conduct. Christians, that is to say, have to overcome the evil of the world in the same way that they see God in Jesus—and Jesus Himself—overcoming it, viz., by love that suffers and endures and longs for reconciliation and moreover reveals itself as so doing. The Christian currency bears stamped on its obverse the Cross of Jesus with the superscription of the love of God, and on its reverse the words of Jesus enjoining the human duties of love and gentleness: and any coin that does not show both obverse and reverse thereby declares itself a counterfeit. Hence it is that we are told by our Lord Himself to turn the other cheek, to yield our cloak to him who grabs our coat, to go the second mile, to love our enemies, and to bless those that curse us, in order that we may become sons of our heavenly Father who is good to the unthankful and the evil (Mt. v. 38-48; Lk. vi. 27-36). Hence it is, too, that Paul tells his readers, "Pay back to no one evil for evil . . . Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place to the wrath (of God), for it is written 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him (something) to drink: for (by) doing this, thou wilt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not conquered by what is evil; but conquer the evil by what is good" (Rom. xii. 17-21).

3. Waiving for a moment the various objections to, and qualifications of, this doctrine, let us see how, in the light of it, the general Christian policy of life compares with the use of war. The *primary aim* of the Christian life is not to prevent at all costs evil acts from being done or to protect people at all costs from suffering at the hands of others, but to create Christlike persons and, through them, to bring about a social order which shall be the Kingdom of God on earth. If this be granted, it must also be clear that the Christian *method* must be consistent with the Christian aim. The distinctively Christian method of overcoming evil is to overcome it *with good*. In the Cross of Christ we see God adopting this method, meeting man's sin and wilfulness by the manifestation of self-sacrificing love. In the Cross we are taught a new way of overcoming evil, a way that is not necessarily successful immediately and in every case (because God does not coerce men into goodness), but a way that makes the strongest possible appeal to all that is good in man. And to the same way of overcoming evil

are we called—as God’s children. The way of war is an entirely different way. Its primary aim is not to win the wrongdoer into the way of right, but at all costs to prevent him doing wrong. It breaks the ties of human fellowship through which alone we can hope to win men to a better mind; it lets loose the lowest passions and uses the most diabolical means—lying, trickery, mutilation, drowning, starvation of non-combatants—in order to secure its end. War is a method which cannot by any stretch of imagination be called Christian, and for that reason cannot serve in Christian hands to achieve the supreme Christian end.

4. What has been said so far will probably obtain fairly wide and general agreement: and to labour the point further would seem to many of our readers like slaying the slain. But what of the fact that there are, and for centuries have been, many sincere Christians who believe it to be right for them to wage war? There is no question here of judging or condemning such people—still less of challenging their right to the Christian name. But it does look as if the onus lay on them of showing how their course of action can be harmonised with their profession of faith in Christ. It must now be our endeavour to examine sympathetically the various arguments that we have heard or seen put forward in support of the position to which we refer.

III.—OBJECTIONS TO THE FUNDAMENTALS.

A.—THE SEVERITY OF GOD.

1. It is held by many—partly on the authority of passages like that quoted above from Rom. xii., partly on the basis of Christian experience—that the teaching of Christianity does not *limit* God’s treatment of sinners to the gentle appeal made to them through the rising sun and the refreshing rain, through the cross of Jesus and the self-denial of His disciples. It leaves a place, they would say, for what the Apostle calls—in the traditional language of Scripture—“the wrath of God.” By this we are to understand all those various pains and visitations which can be interpreted, at least in some sense, as Providential, which (as human experience has often shown) may be the means of moral and spiritual betterment in those who endure them aright, and which no more argue a departure from love than the infliction of pain by a surgeon on a patient proves that he does not love the patient. And it is urged that, if God does really use chastisement as well as moral suasion in the discipline of wrongdoers, and if our task is to copy Him, then it may sometimes be our duty to restrain and punish the wrongdoing of our fellows by violence or even bodily injury, while pursuing at the same time our normal Christian policy of endeavoring to win them over by gentle loving-kindness, wherever opportunity offers.

2. Some of our members would feel that this whole argument rests on a misconception of the Divine nature and the Divine method of action. They would be inclined to deny that God ever inflicts pain or sorrow on His children and to plead that there is nothing in God that we can worthily speak of to-day as His "wrath." If this demurrer be sound, clearly any inference that is drawn about war from the doctrine of the Divine severity falls to the ground.

3. But the whole subject is in an extreme degree abstruse and difficult, and others amongst us are not prepared to put this doctrine aside quite so readily. Suppose it be admitted; assume that God *does* sometimes coerce and punish: does the inference in regard to the human use of violence follow? We must not ignore the fact that our duty to "be imitators of God as dear children" is subject to certain important qualifications on account of the great difference between God's relation to our fellows and our relation to them. He has prerogatives that we do not share. Children are taught to copy their parents—but only within limits, for they are not allowed to chastise one another. God has rights over us which we have not over one another. We do well to copy His love for our fellowmen: it is thus, Jesus tells us, that we are to realise our Divine sonship. But to assume the function of Divine chastisement is beyond our province. "The Lord judge between me and thee . . . but mine hand shall not be upon thee" (1 Sam. xxiv. 12).

4. Strong confirmation of this conclusion is found in the fact that, whereas both Jesus and Paul speak in general terms of the duty of imitating God, yet Jesus specifically connects the thoughts of this imitation with the return of good for evil, and Paul as explicitly rules out Divine punishment from the province of Christian imitation, while both of them in sundry other connections forbid the use of violence and injury as a means of restraining the wrongdoer.

5. Further proof of accuracy is afforded when we apply to our conclusion the acid-test of the Golden Rule. Just because God is our Father, and not our brother-man, we do not dispute His right to visit us with affliction or even death in the discipline of our spirits. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 9).

"Go not far from me, O my strength,
Whom all my times obey:
Take from me anything Thou wilt,
But go not Thou away;
And let the storm that does Thy Will
Deal with me as it may."

But what we can receive submissively and trustfully from God, we should regard as an unwarranted invasion of our rights, were we to receive it from our fellows. An extreme sense of guilt or unworthi-

ness may make a Christian feel that he deserves affliction and even death, but he would not on that account concede his fellow-Christian's right to wound or kill him or to infect him with disease. As responsible and free individuals we hold ourselves subject to our neighbor's rebuke or admonition, but not to violent coercion or bodily chastisement at his hands. That being so, the Golden Rule forbids us to employ these latter methods in dealing with others; and the argument from the wrath of God, therefore, turns out to be, so far as the problem before us is concerned, an irrelevance.

B.—THE DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

1. There is, however, one department of human life where some limitation of the principle of gentleness seems unquestionably necessary, viz. in the training of the children entrusted by God's holy ordinance to our care. We do not propose to challenge the propriety of moderate corporal punishment: for if that propriety be denied there is nothing more to be said under this heading. But if it be conceded that it is impossible for Christian parents to give their children the training they need without some measure of physical coercion and some infliction of disappointment and grief, then we have established an exception to the principle which forbids the forcible restraint of the wrongdoer: and the exception has not unnaturally been appealed to as warranting an analogous exception in the case of an iniquitous foreign power, in other words, as providing a Christian sanction for war.

2. But two facts invalidate this appeal:—

(a) Children stand on an altogether different footing from our adult fellowmen. They are potential personalities only, without that full personal responsibility that comes with years of maturity. Parent and child being "members one of another" in a specially close sense, it is proper that the parent should exercise over the child—though naturally in decreasing measure as years go on—some of that right to command himself and himself only, which constitutes and at the same time limits the freedom of the adult Christian.

(b) Parental discipline aims at the good of the child, and, therefore, excludes anything that is injurious to the child's physical health. Without by any means justifying any chastisement short of the limit of injury, we should at least all agree in censuring a parent who should go to the length of wounding a child; nor should we admit the excuse that he could not otherwise secure obedience. Further, throughout the punishment the parent remains in loving and personal fellowship with the child. In a military conflict, on the contrary, no account is taken of the personal good or safety of the individual enemy: every effort rather is put forth to make the weapons of destruction as deadly as possible. The soldier under training is bidden: "Twist the bayonet

as you pull it out, so as to make a jagged gash.”* The analogy of parental discipline is, therefore, totally misleading, so far as the treatment of the individual fighters is concerned. It is scarcely less so, when we consider ourselves as standing *in loco parentis* to the enemy power as a whole, rather than the individual soldier. Not only is such a comparison extremely remote and dubious in itself, but—even were it otherwise—it leaves untouched the moral difficulty presented by the unmeasured violence done in warfare to the individuals engaged in it.

C.—THE DEFENCE OF OTHERS.

1. It is often said that, granting that Jesus forbids injury in *self-defence*, he nowhere forbids it in the defence of a weak and innocent neighbour. His own ruling, when Peter wanted to defend Him in Gethsemane (Mt. xxvi. 51f.) is rejected, sometimes on the weak ground that the Passion of Jesus was so unique as to furnish no guide to our modern conduct, sometimes on the score that the victim in this case was a *willing* one. However that may be, let us grant at once that there is no question here as to whether the defence of others is a Christian duty or not: it goes without saying that it is so. The question is as to the Christian *method* of defence, and the method, too, *that will lead to the Christian goal*. And here let us remind ourselves that possibility, or even probability, of failure in any particular case is not a valid objection against a policy of defence, for it affects all policies. Under the most efficient and stringent police-system, the policeman may arrive too late, or he may prove too weak to prevent the outrage being done, or the criminal may escape the penalty meant to deter him and others for the future. Our task is not to find a defensive method that will never fail—that cannot be done—but to find the one that is most Christian and therefore, as we believe, on the whole and in the long run the most effective.

2. Suppose we begin by accepting the critic’s guarded concession that Jesus does really forbid all injury in *self-defence*. A man who believes that, can hardly wish to be himself defended by others, in case of attack, in a way that involves injury to his assailant. And if he does not wish to be so defended himself, according to the Golden Rule he ought not so to defend others. The defence which he desires himself and which, therefore, he can give to others, is of another kind.

3. As an illustration of the Christian way of defending others, take the method of the Salvationist—as contrasted with that of the policeman—in dealing with a violent drunkard. Granting the possibility of failure in either case, which of the two, we may ask, is the most Christian and, at the same time, the most efficient defender of the man’s wife and children—is it the policeman who handcuffs the

* E. W. Mason, “Made Free in Prison,” p. 101.

man and claps him in gaol, letting him out after a few days, embittered and enraged, or is it the Salvation Army girl who, with a touch, leads him away like a lamb and makes a convert of him?

4. Observe also that it is not possible for a single person to *combine* the two methods, without seriously impairing the power of at least one of them. The Salvationist will find her power gone, if she brings along the policeman with his handcuffs in order to call for his services in case the man prove obdurate. Her best chance of success is to trust solely to her personal influence as a disinterested Christian. Few will deny that the power of a Christian life is in the long run a greater restraint on others' wrongdoing than is physical force, and that it is therefore *in general* a better defence of others. It is not so commonly seen that the full benefit of the former cannot be had without the disuse of the latter, though this limitation may involve—what any system must involve—the risk of failure in particular cases.

Thus we see that an examination of the Christian duty of defending others shows that this duty cannot serve as a basis on which to rest a Christian sanction for war.

D.—VIOLENT LUNATICS.

Not more than a word or two will be needed in order to deal with another special class of individuals, viz., violent lunatics. Does not the forcible restraint with which they have to be treated prove that the law of gentleness breaks down in extreme cases? To this we reply in the first place that the best method of dealing with madmen is that used by Jesus in dealing with the Gerasene maniac, a method not to be limited (as His own words show us) to Himself, but available for, and actually used by, His apostles and the early Christians. And even to-day Christians, if they would but exercise their faith, may find themselves possessed of larger powers of psychic healing than they ever dreamed of. If this be thought an insufficient answer, we may quite fairly remind ourselves that the lunatic, being *non compos mentis*, is in a somewhat similar situation to the child; that is to say, not being a fully developed and responsible personality, he may rightly be subjected to such restraints as are altogether out of place with a sane person. But we cannot infer from the position and needs of such people that the ordinary sane and adult wrongdoer is to be treated in the same way. And if the virtual madness of all wrongdoing be pressed to such conclusions, then we should find ourselves in a society composed entirely of madmen—to the confusion of all social arrangements and of all our Christian thinking.

E.—SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS.

By arguing carefully, therefore, from first principles and without having recourse to vague or sentimental language, we find ourselves

unable to escape from the conclusion that the fundamental Christian law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," shuts out from the operations of a Christian life all such violence as is involved in the conduct of war. Whatever else may need to be said on the subject, no argument for war that rests on the doctrine of the Divine wrath, or on the need of punishing children or restraining madmen, or on the duty of defending others, can really be regarded as other than an irrelevance. And we may go further and say that the argument, so often used, which simply rests on a demonstration of the wickedness of the enemy and the need for stopping him, cannot be admitted as decisive without yielding up an eternal and fundamental principle of Christian conduct, and thereby implicitly denying the power of the Saviour's Cross. Other and stronger grounds are required, if it is to be proved that the plain and obvious implication of the Saviour's passion—supported as it is by the plain and obvious meaning of His words—is not to regulate the disciple's conduct in matters of this kind.

IV.—THE APPLICATION OF THE FUNDAMENTALS IN AN UN-CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.

Many who have been able to follow us so far will feel that the crux of the whole matter has not yet been reached, and that the pacifist position breaks down under the stress of a more difficult problem, viz., that of the relation of the individual Christian to Society, the Nation, and the State. This problem appears in several different forms; and it must be our endeavour to undertake a fair and patient examination of each, and to attempt an answer to it.

A.—WHAT ELSE COULD WE HAVE DONE IN AUGUST, 1914?

1. It is sometimes thought that the hopeless impracticability of Pacifism can be demonstrated by merely asking the question, "What else could we have done in August, 1914?" and eliciting what is taken to be the only possible answer—"Nothing."

2. But, as it happens, the matter is not quite so simple as that. It needs to be borne in mind, in all discussion of ethical problems of this sort that accurate reasoning and true conclusions are out of the question unless *the subject* about whom each moral judgment is made is clearly indicated and kept in view throughout. Impersonal judgments, couched in the passive voice, or making large use of the word "it," take us nowhere. It is to no purpose that we say, "This or that is right, or necessary, or ought to be done," unless we specify the agent we are contemplating. In the present case, therefore, we are bound to press the prior question, "Whom do you mean by 'we'?" If you mean the people of Great Britain regarded collectively, or their representatives in Parliament or the Cabinet, then it may well be that "we" in that sense could have done nothing better than declare war. But

if by "we" you mean yourself or myself as a Christian individual or as a member of the Holy Catholic Church or of the Kingdom of God, the answer will not necessarily be the same. For "we" in the former sense is not a Christian agent at all, or even a group of Christian agents; it is a predominantly heathen agent—for so we must describe a community of which such a small percentage is even professedly Christian in any real sense. As a heathen agent, it has to act according to heathen standards which, however estimable, are yet at best sub-Christian. Seeing, therefore, a great wrong being done and knowing (*quâ* heathen) of no other means of overcoming wrong except by the use of the sword, it finds the sacred duty laid upon it of declaring war on the aggressor. Such at its best is the case of this country, as Christian apologists for the war usually describe it. And as such we are prepared, for the sake of argument, to allow it to be.

3. But while there may thus have been no honorable alternative to war for a heathen world-power, for "us" in that sense, there *was* another alternative for those of its members who were committed to the service of Jesus Christ. It is not as if our Master had left us without guidance in regard to the way of redressing human wrong. There is a perfectly definite Christian policy for this purpose, and all Christian people can see perfectly well for themselves what it is by reading their Gospels. It is sometimes said that this policy with its counsel of perfection is impracticable in an imperfect world:—

"High Heaven forbids the bold presumptuous strain,
Whose wisest will has fixed us in a state
That must not yet to pure perfection rise."

But clearly in a perfect world no question of how to conquer wrongdoing would ever come up at all. Is not the Christian always called upon to act on a higher and, therefore, a different standard from his fellows? Why should political life be singled out as the one sphere where the Christian must follow the policy of Paganism—good as it is—instead of the better policy of Christ?

4. Let us beware of putting the view here advocated on one side as "too individualistic." Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with; and some folk think that to prove pacifism to be guilty of individualism ought to be quite enough to discredit it in the eyes of all sensible people. But before accepting this verdict, we need to be somewhat clearer as to the sense in which individualism is wrong, and the sense in which pacifism is individualistic. That sort of individualism is wrong which, not content with taking the individual as unit and centre, positively divorces the pursuit of individual purity from the welfare of society. Pacifists have been accused of individualism in this sense.

"Choose therefore whether thou wilt have thy conscience
White as a maiden's hand, or whether England
Be shattered into fragments."

But the antithesis is a false one; and the right sort of pacifism is, as we hope to show, guiltless of the wrong sort of individualism. If, however, by individualism you mean the right of the individual, when society is doing its best, to go one better, if you mean a policy of social reconstruction which sets to work, not by handling it through nations or other vast entities, and rearing them up into utopias regardless of the intractability of human nature, but by convincing and persuading individuals to pursue unfalteringly the true Christian ideal without tarrying for any, and by knitting those individuals together all the world over in a sacred and super-national brotherhood, then, so far from being a reproach, that individualism is one of the clearest features of the Kingdom of God on earth.

B.—WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF WE HAD ALL BEEN
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS?

Few objections to pacifism are more widely current than that which accepts it as obvious that, if all the men in England had been Conscientious Objectors, complete and utter ruin would have overwhelmed this country and with it the cause of civilization. Few objections are more frequent, but few are more unreasonable. The critic usually claims to be a practical man, who wants us to face hard facts; yet his bogey is constructed not of facts at all, but of pure suppositions, and even those extremely unlikely ones. If he insists on arguing on the hypothesis of all Englishmen being pacifists, we insist that he shall not shut his eyes to certain other hypotheses inseparable from his own, namely, the advancement of Christianity (with all its positive power for good) to such an extent that all Englishmen prefer to lay down their lives rather than do what they believe to be wrong, and such a corresponding advancement of Christianity in neighbouring countries as to put all risk of war out of the question. "If pacifist principles should ever prevail," says Prof. Peake in "Prisoners of Hope," "it is not likely to come in such a way that the British race accepts the principles of non-resistance while other nations remain untouched." The pacifist certainly hopes that all his fellow-countrymen will adopt his views; but he knows that the fulfillment of this hope must be a long and gradual process; he knows that while it may lessen his country's military resources, it will increase its spiritual power for good, and that it will inevitably be accompanied *pari passu* by similar processes in other countries. If we are mistaken in these calculations, what alternative have we but atheism and despair? And that the last-mentioned hope at any rate is not purely visionary, we have evidence in the fact that the Conscientious Objectors' Movement in England has already had the effect of encouraging a band of young men in Germany to bind themselves together under a solemn undertaking that will never allow themselves to be made use of in any war. It is an utter fallacy to

reject personal pacifism on the imaginary ground that the spread of it is going to land any country in sudden destruction at the hands of its foes, or in a state of anarchy within its own borders.

C.—THE RELATIVE JUSTIFICATION OF THE PAGAN STATE.

1. The immediately foregoing apologia implies the temporary continuance of the Pagan State with its Pagan methods. As we do not seriously entertain the hope of a miraculous and instantaneous mass-conversion of the whole nation, we disclaim the intention of pressing pacifism on any except the individuals whom we may be able to convince of its truth. Whether these be few or many, they are at any rate not yet numerous enough to dispose of the Pagan Government.

2. Of that Government we have a very definite doctrine laid down by the Apostle Paul in Romans xiii. 1-7. He there says that the magistrate is ordained by God to act as His servant and to inflict His wrath as a punishment on evil-doers, and that for this purpose "he beareth not the sword in vain." Have we not here, it is asked, a Divine sanction for our magisterial and police systems, with their use of coercion for suppressing crime; and does not this put a real limitation on the Christian duty of gentleness?

3. In order to meet this point we do not need to bring the Apostle into conflict with his Master, for Jesus may have shared the same general doctrine (Mk. xii. 17; John xix. 11)—at least, He says nothing inconsistent with it. But we do need to remember that the words of the Apostle and the corresponding words of Jesus were spoken of *Pagan*, not Christian, magistrates. As Pagans, the Roman governors knew nothing of the distinctively Christian solvent for sin. They felt—at any rate the best of them—a sense of duty prompting them to take steps for the suppression of crime and immorality; and they did this in the only way which they knew and could make use of, until they became Christians, viz., by the employment of coercion and violent punishments.

4. Now a man who obeys his sense of duty is thereby a servant of God, even although he does not know the Christian way of doing things. It is the same God who gives the natural man his sterling sense of duty and grand capacity for self-sacrifice, and who speaks to us through the lips of Jesus. The service of the natural man may be crude and "sub-Christian," but it is still a service. Hence it is perfectly possible for us to see in the magistrate—who (to adopt Paul's view of the matter) brings the Divine displeasure home to the criminal in a rough way by the exaction of justice—a servant of God, because he is rendering the best service he knows, without thereby committing ourselves to the duty of copying his particular method or directly co-operating with him in it. In other words, the justification of the magis-

trate is not absolute, but relative—relative to his ignorance of Christian principles and consequent inability to practise them.

5. The Christian on the contrary is supposed to know these principles and to be committed to them. The part which is allotted to him, and of which he alone is capable, is to bring home to the sinner not the wrath of God—there are plenty of other agents and agencies that will do that, if it needs doing—but the love of God shown in the Cross of Jesus, which is the power of God unto salvation. If we read carefully the closing verses of Romans xii. along with the opening verses of xiii. we shall be struck by the marked way in which the Christian policy for the conquest of wrongdoing is contrasted with the Pagan policy, albeit the latter has under the Providence of God a temporary place in human affairs pending the acceptance of God's Gospel by all mankind. This last admission does not carry with it the duty of the Christian to be, on select occasions, the executioner of his fellows; for the justice of an execution is relative to, or bound up with, the sub-Christian or non-Christian shortsightedness of the dutiful executioner. Otherwise, if it be the Christian's duty to cure wrong as the Pagan cures it, the Cross of Jesus and the love of God will be left without human witnesses.

6. This view of the justification of coercive government—and, we may add, of wars waged in righteous causes—as being relative to the inability of the agents, whether professedly Christian or not, to grasp the fundamentals of Christianity aright, enables us to recognise to the full the achievement by violent means of solid benefits in the course of human history, and to do full justice to the self-sacrifice and bravery of those who have helped to gain them, without being obliged by the duty of gratitude or of self-consistency to adopt for ourselves the same policy or standard as they did. Gratitude for the service and sacrifice of our fellows is ill shown by accommodating our own form of service to theirs, when God has put within our reach guidance that was not clear to them, and particularly when a general willingness to imitate them would frustrate, by the indefinite perpetuation of war, the very purpose in the hope of achieving which they gave their lives.

D.—THE DUTY WE OWE TO SOCIETY AND THE STATE.

1. But how, it may be asked, is this right of personal divergence from the rest of the community to be harmonized with the demands of national and social solidarity? Are we not bidden by Jesus to render unto Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, and by Paul to be submissive and obedient to the Government (Rom. xiii. 1ff.; *cf.* Tit. iii. 1); and does not this carry with it the duty of rendering such service as society, in the persons of its representatives, demands for its own defence and for the execution of its normal functions?

2. Our answer to this is that, as Christians, we admit to the full the rightfulness of the demand that we should love and serve to the

utmost of our power the fellowmen in the midst of whom we dwell and to whom we are indebted for so much that we need, and that we should devote to them the labour of our hands and minds and be ready to die, if need be, on their behalf. But we maintain that this does not mean that we must do everything our fellowmen desire us to do. Some of the best services that have been rendered to society have been rendered in the face of society's most severe disapprobation. The best way in which we can serve our fellows is to discover the way of life which Jesus came to inculcate, and then to pursue it with all our heart. Our duty as members of God's Kingdom or of the Holy Catholic Church of Jesus which is universal and spiritual and supernational, embraces and surpasses all other sectional duties such as those of domestic or national life. If the lesser loyalty ever claims to take precedence of the greater, that is a sure sign that its true obligations have been miscalculated. "We must obey God rather than men," and that in men's own truest interests. He who is fulfilling his obligations to the Kingdom of God is, *à fortiori*, doing all that his fellowmen have a right to ask of him. Acknowledging, therefore, the duty of national and social solidarity, we say that, for the very sake of the country which God has bidden us love and serve, we must make it our aim first and foremost to discover the Christian way of life and to follow that, even though it may in some cases run counter to the preferences of our fellow-countrymen.

E.—SHOULD WE CONSIDER OURSELVES INVOLVED IN THE NATION'S SIN?

1. There are probably many who, without caring to contest in detail the general course of the foregoing arguments, yet felt that their lot was so intimately bound up with that of their fellow-citizens, by the fact that they have in the past silently acquiesced in sub-Christian or even anti-Christian methods of international and political action, that at the commencement of the war they were involved in that course of action which received at that time the highest moral response possible to the nation as a whole.

2. To this it may be said in the first place that such a choice involves an idea of the nation as the one unit which has a right to call upon men to act in ways contrary to their moral sense, and that such an identification with the national unit leads in the case of war to a breach in our fellowship with the larger unity, the whole world of men and women. Secondly, it may be urged that Christianity calls men so to renounce their past sins, whether of omission or commission, as to "hereafter lead a godly life." We may by past sin be involved in unhappy consequences for ourselves and others, but never are we—if the Christian Gospel be true—involved in the obligation of committing further *sin*. In the third place, surely there must often arise

cases where the moral aims of a Christian and a non-Christian will be similar, if not identical, but the method chosen for reaching the goal will be different. For the Christian, the question of method is *vital*: in no sense can it be regarded as a secondary matter.

F.—HAS THE PACIFIST A RIGHT TO ENJOY SAFETY?

We often hear the plea that the acceptance of peace and security involves the obligation of military service in the defence of these privileges. This plea, however, looks only at the surface of things. Peace and freedom from molestation are as much part of a man's right as fresh air and sunshine. If a man is told that they can be secured only by means of proceedings taken without his consent and in contravention of his conscience, what more can he do than offer to expose himself to the alleged risk and take the consequences? The refusal of this offer cannot make it a duty for him to do what he believes to be wrong, or to divest himself deliberately of the enjoyment of a right which he is prepared, *if need be*, to sacrifice to his convictions. But further, even the way in which the risk is represented to him—speaking now of war between civilised powers—seems to stand in need of some amendment. Have our own armaments and our own foreign politics nothing at all to do with the enemy's desire to attack us? Is his aggressive spirit totally unconnected with our own martial vigour? Does not the antagonism of one belligerent owe most of its sharpness to the reciprocal antagonism of the other? Once the appeal to arms is admitted, it is idle to represent all the bitterness and danger of the conflict as arising from the unprovoked savagery of one side only. It is hardly a paradox to say that our inflated armaments do as much towards endangering our peace and safety as they do towards protecting them. And in the recent conflict there were few non-combatants whose personal safety would not have been far better secured (if to secure their peace and safety be, as is often implied in criticisms of the pacifist position, the first consideration) by an early peace than by the continuance of war.

V.—THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FUNDAMENTALS.

1. The reproach is often cast at pacifists, not only of honoring the letter of our Lord's teaching above the spirit, but of accepting only so much of the letter as suits them, of picking and choosing, of laying stress on the words about non-resistance when military service is to be avoided, but ignoring the exacting commands about embracing poverty when wealth is to be acquired or preserved.

2. It should be clear from the whole argument of this paper that the pacifist position is not a literalistic one, but an appeal to the spirit and essential nature of Christ's Gospel. The mere quotation of pas-

sages in elucidation or support of a position does not itself make the position literalistic. The obedience that Christ calls for is not a literal obedience, but it is an absolute obedience. Can it be shown that pacifism is contrary to the spirit of Christianity? If that spirit in Jesus issued in such externals as the Sermon on the Mount and unresisting submission to death, how can the same spirit in us issue in externals of an altogether contrary kind?

3. On the particular question of wealth and poverty, it has to be borne in mind that some of our Lord's hard sayings about resigning one's property, are not spoken for every intending disciple of every age, but bear reference to the special conditions of Jesus' Palestinian mission, and the special personal needs of those to whom they were spoken. It is thus surely that we are to explain the exacting command addressed to the Rich Young Ruler.

4. But it is not contended that this qualification suffices to remove the whole difficulty. It has to be admitted that the social and economic system of the present day exhibits certain features flagrantly out of keeping with the spirit of Jesus' teaching. War may be regarded, along with the various evils of the economic system, as being simply one of many symptoms of the same deeply rooted evil in human society. But whereas, in case of war, the teaching of our religion points with sufficient clearness to certain definite principles, positive and negative, of personal action, so that the individual Christian, though unable to avoid being involved in some sense or other in the nation's act, yet knows of certain definite things he must do or must refrain from doing, there is as yet in the realm of social and economic duty no such line of radical amendment for which we can plead—as the proper and immediate policy *for Christians generally*—with anything like the same definiteness and certitude. The task of applying the principles of Christianity to modern life is one of considerable difficulty and perplexity—a task that can be fulfilled not all at once but only piecemeal, according as the particular problems it raises are more or less easily soluble, or the issues they involve more or less clearly visible. The different questions have to be taken up in the order of their relative clarity. Just as in the past, whenever the time was ripe, this or that issue was thrust into the foreground, and had to be faced and settled, and thus great decisions were reached that are destined never to be reversed, such as that securing religious toleration and that by which slavery was condemned, so in the age in which we now live the Church of Jesus is called upon to face the challenge presented to it by a world that lives on the brink of war, and so, too, in the age on which we are already entering, we shall be called upon to find a Christian policy of conduct whereby, without waiting for the conversion of the whole world, Christian people may be able in the spirit of Jesus to

make their personal and collective contributions to the removal of the social and industrial evils of the time. To decline to take a step in advance—even though it is pointed out by the clear dictates of reason and conscience—just because the principles on which it would be taken are felt to involve other steps in other directions where we do not at present clearly see our way, is surely tantamount to abjuring altogether the task of refashioning human society on Christian lines. Only by advancing up to the furthest limits of the light now given to us, can we hope to receive further light on these harder and more complicated problems which now seem so dark and difficult.

VI.—CONCLUSION.

These pages, written rather by way of appeal and challenge than as a conclusive demonstration, are addressed to all those who, having felt it right to throw in their lot with their fellow-countrymen in the recent war, are yet conscious that the problem of the bearing of Christianity on war is still with them, and that they are not yet in possession of the full solution of it. Especially are they addressed to those who, while engaged in war, have continued to feel deeply and sincerely that war is an un-Christian thing. The purpose of what has been written is to put afresh the question whether after all Christian pacifism properly stated is not more capable of an all-round defence as the right *Weltpolitik* for Christian people than belligerency has shown itself to be. Among the many things that were said and written, particularly during the early stages of the war, with a view to proving the compatibility of Christianity and military service, was there a single statement issued, dealing thoroughly and adequately with the various questions involved and treating them as a systematic whole, which was able to establish the desired conclusion without involving a virtual surrender for the time being of Christianity itself? If there was, the author of this appeal would be glad to see it and learn of it; but if there was not, then surely there is a least a *prima facie* case—now that the immediate practical crisis no longer weighs upon us—of reconsidering the whole question, and of seeing whether some solution, better and worthier of our Christianity than the one into which the Church in her unreadiness was swept, and which has been defended by so many fragmentary and dubious pleas, is not now within our reach. It is in the confident hope that such a way out of the *impasse* is now open to us, that the foregoing appeal is issued, not on any narrow, sectional, or sentimental grounds, not in any spirit of censure or self-righteousness, not in any forgetfulness of our duty to our country or of the merits of the honoured dead, but with the sole desire to co-operate sympathetically with our fellow-Christians in the discovery of the truth and the advancement of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation

The Fellowship of Reconciliation unites a group of men and women who are seeking for a better way of life, and who believe that in Jesus Christ we have not only an ideal for the future but a way of life for the present. To us it appears that in accepting as inevitable the present world order we have all failed to interpret the mind of Christ, and that confidence in His leadership involves us in the endeavor to follow Him unswervingly, at whatever cost, in personal, social, industrial, national and international life. The Fellowship is founded in the faith that love as revealed in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ is not only the fundamental basis of a true human society, but the effective power for overcoming evil and for accomplishing His redemptive purposes.

It is intended that members shall work out personally and in their own way what is involved in their membership. There is no program or theory of social reconstruction to which all are committed. Neither is there any intention to duplicate existing organizations. On the contrary, the Fellowship desires to use every opportunity of working in and through the churches, recognizing that to them especially belongs the sacred duty of proclaiming the unity of mankind in Jesus Christ, and of leading in His reconstructive work.

Further information about the Fellowship will be given gladly on request to the Secretary, 108 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

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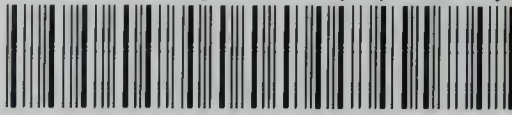
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